

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (Currently Amended) A membrane filtration device, for withdrawing permeate from a multicomponent liquid substrate, said membrane device comprising:

a multiplicity of hollow fiber membranes, or fibers, ~~unconfined in a shell of a module,~~ said fibers together having a surface area $>1 \text{ m}^2$, said fibers being swayable in said substrate and each fiber having a length >0.5 meter;

a first header and a second header ~~disposed in vertically spaced-apart relationship;~~

said first header and said second header having opposed ends of each fiber sealingly secured therein, all open ends of said fibers open to a permeate-discharging face of at least one or both headers;

permeate collection means to collect said permeate, sealingly connected in open fluid communication with ~~a~~ the or each permeate-discharging face of ~~at least one of said headers;~~

~~means to withdraw said permeate;~~

wherein,

said fibers, said headers and said permeate collection means together forming an ~~integrated combination wherein said fibers are essentially vertically disposed and~~ assembly with ends of individual fibers are potted in closely spaced-apart relationship in cured resin;

the assembly is adapted to be used with said first header being upper and disposed in vertically spaced-apart relationship above said second header, with opposed faces at a fixed distance and the fibers oriented generally vertically;

each of said fibers ~~having~~ has a length from 0.1% to less than 5% greater than said fixed distance so as to permit restricted displacement of an intermediate portion of each fiber, independently of the movement of another fiber; and,

the fibers, the headers and the permeate collection means are submersible below the surface of the substrate.

2. (Cancelled)

3. (Currently Amended) The membrane filtration device of claim 2-1 wherein the permeate collection means has a fitting, port, or outlet for connecting to a permeate pipe, duct, conduit or manifold adapted to extending from the permeate collection means to a point above the surface of the substrate.

4. (Currently Amended) The membrane filtration device of claim 3-1 wherein the permeate collection means is a header enclosure, collection pan, permeate pan or cap covering the ~~at least one~~ or each permeate discharging face.

5. (Original) A membrane filtration system comprising
(a) a tank for holding a substrate at ambient pressure during filtration;
(b) a membrane filtration device according to claim 1 immersed below the surface of the substrate;
(c) an aeration system for producing bubbles in the substrate which contact the fibers; and,
(d) a source of suction in fluid communication with the membrane filtration device.

6. (Original) The membrane filtration system of claim 5 further comprising a backwashing system for backwashing the membrane filtration device with a liquid.

7. (Original) The membrane filtration system of claim 6 wherein the liquid is permeate.

8. (New) The membrane filtration system of claim 5 wherein the source of suction communicates with the membrane filtration device through a pipe, duct, conduit, or manifold extending from the permeate collection means of the membrane filtration device to a point above the surface of the substrate.